

FALL IS BEACH TIME
in Galveston

PUMPKINS, SQUASH & GOURDS:
Oh My!

NEED AN EXCUSE
to Spruce?

bayou city

Experience it!

Taking a Bow

From the audience to the stage, find your place in H-Town's performing arts.

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The Little BLACK Dress

Celebrate the LBD and find one to love. > PAGE 46



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Island Escape

Get away to Galveston this fall and experience the island at its best.

BY JULIE OSTERMAN



Fall just might be the perfect time to visit Galveston Island. The weather is cooler, the crowds thinner and the water bluer, and there's still an abundance of things to do and see.

"The weather is wonderful and allows people to comfortably enjoy the beaches. You can also enjoy the island's outdoor attractions and festivals without the crowds you find during summer," says Leah Cast of the Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Fall can provide a very charming oasis for Houstonians who have the luxury of being so close that weekend getaways are convenient and easy."

Recently named one of TripAdvisor's "Top 10 Destinations on the Rise in the U.S.," Galveston has changed dramatically since Hurricane Ike—with millions of dollars invested in tourist attractions followed by record-setting visitation the past two years.

If you haven't set foot on the island lately, be sure to explore Houston's best-kept secret this fall.

LIFE'S A BEACH

Galveston's waves tend to be clearer and calmer in the autumn due to weather patterns and currents, explains Cast. Plus, there's less seaweed on the shore, making for bluer water and clean beaches.

With 32 miles of beaches, the island beckons to enthusiasts of a variety of outdoor activities, from surfing, fishing and swimming, to hiking and bird watching. Some folks prefer East Beach or Stewart Beach, while others swear by the West End beaches, including Galveston Island State Park and several beach pocket parks. And then, of course, there's the Seawall in the middle, which overflows with dining options, accommodations and family fun.

From blue waters to the history of Bishop's Palace, Galveston offers myriad fall options.

The Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier, only 2 years old, but reminiscent of the original midcentury attraction, boasts 16 one-of-a-kind rides, boardwalk games, food and shops.

"Unlike many boardwalk operations, the pier extends out over the water creating an exciting sensation of being suspended over the Gulf of Mexico," says Mark Kane, vice president of Landry's Amusement Division. "We encourage families visiting the South to come experience the latest world-class venue on the third coast."

After playing to your heart's content, enjoy a casual oceanside meal just west of the pier at The Spot Restaurant & Tiki Bar. Other Seawall favorites include Gaido's and Benno's on the Beach. For a chic night out, grab a drink at The San Luis Resort's posh H2o poolside lounge, and dine in style at The Steakhouse.



STROLLING THE STRAND

Galveston's Historic Downtown Strand Seaport district has something for everyone, from charming boutiques, bookstores and coffee shops to galleries, museums and historical attractions. Take a stroll on the Strand and adjacent downtown streets Mechanic, Market and Post Office, where you'll find many spots worth a look-see, including Nautical Antiques and Tangerine Boutique. Grab a cup of joe at MOD Coffeehouse, or something sweet at LaKing's Confectionary.

Delve into the island's art scene at ArtWalk (Oct. 11) or ARToberFEST (Oct. 18-19). Kimberly Thom, a Houstonian who recently built a beach house in Galveston, bought her first piece of original local art at the last ArtWalk.

"It's such a great atmosphere—small community, great talent, old architecture, music, art," she says. "What more do you want on a Saturday night?"

Another cultural must-see is the Grand 1894 Opera House, a beautiful historic theater. Highlights of the fall schedule include Broadway musical comedy "Sister Act" (Oct. 25), "The Phantom of the Opera" silent film accompanied live on the organ by Rob Landes (Nov. 1) and Willie Nelson (Nov. 14).

Get a sneak peek into 20th-century high society by touring the Broadway Beauties: the 1859 Ashton Villa, 1892 Bishop's Palace and 1895 Moody Mansion. There's more history downtown at the Lone Star Flight Museum, Railroad Museum and year-round Haunted Mayfield Manor. Both the historic Hotel Galvez and the Galveston Historical Foundation offer haunted history tours throughout October.

Over on the harbor, history buffs should check out the Texas Seaport Museum and Tall Ship Elissa, Pier 21 Theater and the Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig & Museum.

After a long day of exploring, grab a meal on the patio at Olympia Grill Pier 21, overlooking the harbor, and then relax at The Rooftop Bar inside the Tremont House hotel for a fabulous view of downtown.

HOLIDAYS ON THE ISLE

Beginning Nov. 15, Moody Gardens promises to be the coolest destination around... literally. They're bringing in 900 tons of ice for the breathtaking "ICE LAND: Ice Sculptures," in which a team of 20 carvers from China will create a winter wonderland inside an insulated tent kept at a chilly 9 degrees. Don't worry; they'll lend you a parka while you gaze at the giant ice sculptures featuring holiday themes, as well as characters from "SpongeBob SquarePants." While you're there, don't miss Moody's 13th annual Festival of Lights, featuring more than a million lights, ice skating and snow tubing on the Arctic Ice Slide.

"We are very excited to bring such a unique experience to south Texas," says John Zendt, Moody Gardens President and CEO. "There is no other venue in the Southwest that offers such a diverse range of activities and amenities for a complete holiday experience."

Other island festivities kick off Nov. 28 with the holiday lighting celebration at Hotel Galvez, and Home for the Holidays Gift Market downtown.

i For a complete guide on where to stay and what to do, visit galveston.com.

if you go

choose to cruise

If you really have island fever, why not set sail? Embark on a cruise aboard Royal Caribbean or Carnival, both offering new ships sailing from Galveston year-round.



ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Aboard Royal Caribbean, you'll discover the beauty and adventure of the western Caribbean. Ports of call include Cozumel and Costa Maya, Mexico, Grand Cayman, Jamaica, Honduras and Belize. While you cruise, enjoy amenities such as Broadway-style shows, casino, fitness center, spa, full-court basketball, waterpark, ice-skating rink, rock climbing wall and, of course, shore excursions.

CARNIVAL

Sailing the western Caribbean with similar ports of call, Carnival also ventures east to Key West and the Bahamas. Its 11-day southern Caribbean cruise aboard Carnival Triumph sails to the Cayman Islands, Aruba, Bonaire, Grenada, St. Maarten and Puerto Rico. Onboard activities are fun for the whole family, including stage shows, karaoke, comedy, casino action, spa and fitness, kids club and water play.

PARK & CRUISE

Many of the island's hotels offer free parking and a shuttle to the port with a one-night stay before or after your cruise [see galveston.com/parkandcruise]. Since parking can cost \$70 or more, depending on your cruise length, this can be a great value. Plus, you'll get to enjoy a taste of Galveston, too.